

Smoke from wildfires prompts health caution

By Sun-Star Staff

Merced Sun-Star, Friday, Aug. 14, 2015

Local air quality officials have once again issued a warning about the harmful health effects of wildfire smoke that can potentially reach the Valley floor.

Smoke from two wildfires – the Rough fire in Fresno County and the Cabin fire in Tulare County – has prompted the caution in Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties.

This smoke is currently concentrated in the mountainous and foothill areas of the air basin, air officials said Thursday, but impact on the Valley floor is possible until the fires are extinguished.

Smoke from fires produces fine particulate matter, which can cause serious health problems, including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attack and stroke, air officials said.

Officials ask that people with heart or lung disease follow their doctor's advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure.

People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to health effects from these pollutants.

Sierra wildfires in eastern Fresno, Tulare counties continue to grow

By Tomas Kassahun

Fresno Bee, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015

Two Sierra wildfires sparked by lightning continued to spread Thursday in Fresno and Tulare counties, pushing smoke into the Valley and sparking air advisories.

The Rough fire in the Sierra National Forest, which has burned 9,948 acres in Fresno County and is zero percent contained, crossed the Middle Fork of the King's River on Thursday, said spokeswoman Iveth Hernandez.

The Sierra National Forest said the fire has been upgraded to Type 2, meaning additional help is needed from firefighters outside of the local area. A Type 2 Interagency Management Team is expected to take over command of the fire at 6 a.m. Friday.

The fire is being handled by helicopters using water from Hume Lake, because the area is not accessible to firefighters on the ground.

Currently there are no closures on the Sierra National Forest, Hernandez said.

The Cabin fire, burning in the Golden Trout Wilderness in the Sequoia National Forest, spread to 6,417 acres Thursday.

The fire is expected to spread further into the burn scar of the 2011 Lion Fire, but it should slow down as it reaches areas of sparse vegetation and rocky outcroppings, the U.S. Forest Service said.

Smoke will continue to be produced from interior fuels being consumed as well as fire growth to the north, but it's expected to diminish over the next few weeks.

Areas within the fire perimeter will continue to smolder until winter rainfall extinguishes the fire completely, the forest service said.

Nearly 500 firefighters spent the past two weeks confining the Cabin Fire to an area north of Mountaineer Creek, and east of Maggie Mountain.

Travel is limited to those areas east of the Old Hockett Trail.

Areas west of the Old Hockett Trail, within the boundaries of the Golden Trout Wilderness, are closed.

Backcountry travelers can access the wilderness area northeast of Lewis Camp Trailhead, the forest service said.

The two wildfires have prompted health cautionary statement for smoke impacts in Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties foothills and mountainous areas.

Smoke from fires produces fine-particulate matter, which can cause health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke.

Residents can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley.

Two fires prompt health caution

Wildfire smoke is impacting foothill communities

Sierra Star and Vida en el Valle, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015

Two wildfires, Rough Fire in Fresno County and Cabin Fire in Tulare County, have prompted local air officials to issue a health cautionary statement for smoke impacts in Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare and the Valley portion of Kern counties foothills and mountainous areas. Currently smoke impacts are concentrated in the mountainous and foothill areas of the air basin, but impacts on the Valley floor are possible until the fires are extinguished.

Smoke from fires produces fine-particulate matter (PM2.5), which can cause serious health problems including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke. Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors' advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure. Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.

People with existing respiratory conditions, young children and elderly people are especially susceptible to health effects from these pollutants. Air District officials urge residents to follow their doctors' orders when exposed to fire emissions.

Residents can check the District's wildfire page at www.valleyair.org/wildfires for information about any current wildfires and whether they are impacting the Valley. Residents can also check the nearest air monitor to their location to determine localized air-quality conditions. Visit the Real-time Air Advisory Network page on the District's website to subscribe for free: www.valleyair.org/RAAN.

For more information, visit www.valleyair.org or call a District office in Fresno (559-230-6000), Modesto (209-557-6400) or Bakersfield (661-381-1809).

Two wildland fires raise health concerns

By David Castellon

Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, August 13, 2015

Smoke from two major wildland fires in Tulare and Fresno counties have prompted the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to issue health warnings.

The "cautionary statements" for people with allergies and health problems that could be aggravated by smoke in the air was issued Thursday for Tulare, Merced, Madera and Fresno counties, along with Kern county's foothills and mountainous areas.

"Currently, smoke impacts are concentrated in the mountainous and foothill areas of the air basin, but impacts on the Valley floor are possible until the fires are extinguished," states a press release from the agency.

The Cabin Fire, northeast of Camp Nelsen in Tulare County, has burned more than 6,400 acres in the Golden Trout Wilderness of the Sequoia National Forest and was 96 percent contained on Thursday, the U.S. Forest Service reported.

Officials reported Thursday that the rate of growth had significantly slowed down, and a portion of the fire was moving into the site of a 2011 wildland fire, where there will be little fuel to burn.

“Aggressive suppression action will be taken to stop the fire from spreading towards the communities outside the wilderness. Smoke will continue to be produced from interior fuels being consumed as well as fire growth to the north, but [it] is expected to diminish over the next few weeks. Areas within the fire perimeter will continue to smolder until winter rainfall extinguishes the fire completely,” states a Forest Service press release.

The Rough Fire has burned about 10,000 acres in the Sierra National Forest in Fresno County, with no containment reported Thursday.

Smoke from both fires are producing fine particulate matter, which can be inhaled and cause serious health problems, including lung disease, asthma attacks and increased risk of heart attacks and stroke.

“Where conditions warrant, people with heart or lung disease should follow their doctors’ advice for dealing with episodes of particulate exposure,” the control district states in its press release. “Additionally, older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure or heavy exertion, depending on their local conditions.”

Air quality in Tulare County was good on Thursday and was expected to be moderate today, according to the district’s website.

To get more information about wildfires and their effects on Valley air, go online to www.valleyair.org/wildfires. Data from local air monitors also is available on the site.